

## ***We Can Tell What Animals Eat by Looking at Their Teeth***

Believe it or not, we can tell what types of food an animal usually eats just by looking at its teeth. Why do you suppose this is? Well, certain types of teeth are better at performing different tasks. Today, we will be talking about three different types of teeth: incisors, canines, and molars.

**Incisors** are the teeth furthest forward in the mouth. These teeth are shaped like a chisel and are great for cutting things. Most animals have incisors on both their upper and lower jaws, although one of our local mammals lacks them on its upper jaw. Most humans have four incisors on their top jaw and four on their bottom jaw. Find your incisors. How many do you have?

**Canines** are the teeth located just behind the incisors. There is typically one on each side of the mouth. Canine teeth can be found on the upper and lower jaw, making a maximum of four. These teeth are often longer than the other teeth in the mouth. Find your canine teeth. How many do you have? What shape are they? People often describe canine teeth as being pointy and sharp. Things that are pointy and sharp are great for tearing flesh. Even though canines are great for tearing apart food, not all animals have canine teeth.

**Molars** are all of the teeth that are located behind the canines. The molars are large, flat, and have many tiny ridges on them. Molars are used to grind up food, especially plants. Looking at the illustration below; you also will notice teeth called premolars. For this activity, we will just include these teeth in with molars.

Gray fox skull showing types, arrangement, and numbers of teeth

